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Chairman: Mr. Valencia Rodriguez . . . . . (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Agenda item 67

Question of Antarctica

General debate, consideration of and action on draft resolutions (A/49/370; A/C.1/49/L.53)

The Chairman: In accordance with the Committee's programme of work and timetable, and its subsequent decision, this afternoon the First Committee will begin its general debate, consideration of and action on draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 67, "Question of Antarctica".

Following consultations with delegations, and with the concurrence of the Committee, I should like to suggest that the Committee proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/49/L.53. It will be my intention to introduce this draft resolution — which, as members are aware, is proposed by the Chairman — after we have heard all the statements in the general debate.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee agrees with that suggestion.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I now call on the first speaker in debate on agenda item 67, the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): The Malaysian delegation is extremely pleased that the debate on the question of Antarctica, which has been going on in this Committee for the past 12 years, has at long last resulted in a consensus text. My delegation has always maintained that international cooperation is the only way to ensure that Antarctica remains the heritage of all mankind. I must congratulate the Consultative and the non-Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty on having made this historic occasion possible, opening a new chapter in international cooperation on Antarctica. The consensus text before us meets the objectives that we set out to achieve when the debate began in the United Nations 12 years ago. It is a good example of consensus which takes into account and respects the national positions of delegations.

Protecting Antarctica is crucial to the global ecosystem. It comprises 10 per cent of the Earth's surface, has more than 70 per cent of the Earth's known fresh-water reserves and 90 per cent of the world's ice-sheets, and, with three major oceans converging at Antarctica, exerts a major influence on the global climate. Antarctica also occupies a unique position as a storehouse of mineral, marine and other resources. Antarctica is extremely precious to the whole world as a natural laboratory and environmental observation post.

In this regard, the adoption in October 1991 of the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty by the Consultative Parties was a much-needed step. The outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio in June 1992, demonstrated the commitment of the international community to undertaking necessary measures to tackle environmental problems to create a future of hope for the generations to come. My delegation trusts that this

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Committee can now build on the common and serious concerns to ensure that the interests of the entire international community, reposed in the United Nations, will influence the future course of Antarctica.

My delegation remains convinced that, given its role as a truly universal intergovernmental Organization, the United Nations has an important role to play on this issue. The United Nations has the capability, with its world-wide network, of receiving and distributing information related to Antarctica to Member States and research and non-governmental organizations. The international community should reinforce the positive developments of the Rio Summit to promote the importance of safeguarding Antarctica and its impact on the global environment. The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties should, on the basis of the agreement at the Rio Summit, hold seminars or symposiums on the subject on an annual basis.

Under the multi-year thematic programme of work for the Commission on Sustainable Development adopted at its first session in June 1993, chapter 17 of Agenda 21 would be considered by the Commission in 1996. In this regard, we look forward to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties' providing to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its 1996 session information related to the implementation of the relevant sections of chapter 17 of Agenda 21. We note that, in the decision taken at the Eighteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held last April in Kyoto, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research was requested to forward its strategic plan for Antarctic global-change research to the secretariats of the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

Pollution remains a major environmental problem in Antarctica. With the increase in human activities, the situation is expected to worsen. This has been acknowledged by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties. The number of countries establishing research programmes and the number of tourists seeking to visit Antarctica is on the rise. This development increases the need for energy, which in turn raises the risks of oil spills and exacerbates the problem of waste disposal.

The vulnerability of Antarctica to oil spills is alarming. There was a report recently in *The New York Times* of a spillage between August and September this year of over 20,000 gallons, estimated at about 5 to 10 per cent of the total amount of fuel stored at that base. The fuel spilled was gas oil obtained from the distillation of petroleum, which is highly toxic and cannot be easily cleared. A total of 26 signature countries of the 1965 Antarctic Treaty have scientific bases in the region and together use 16 million gallons of organic fuels each year to provide heating for some 3,000 people. In order to avoid the further pollution of Antarctica from oil spills, we wish to call on the Consultative Parties to take steps to ensure that their scientific bases phase out the use of hydrocarbon for fuel in favour of solar and wind power.

Antarctica also serves as a crucial area in mankind's efforts to understand such global phenomena as global warming and the thinning of the ozone layer. The adverse effects of human activities in Antarctica will deprive mankind of the scientific opportunity of studying these global changes.

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties for providing the Secretary-General with a report of their eighteenth meeting. This demonstrates the spirit of cooperation so necessary to building a partnership between the Consultative Parties and the Non-Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty. The report goes a long way towards helping the Non-Consultative Parties understand the various aspects of the activities undertaken by the Consultative Parties which are of relevance to the rest of the international community. Such activities include the operation of the Antarctic Treaty System, the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, tourism and non-governmental activities in the Treaty area, and inspections under the Treaty.

My delegation welcomes the involvement of United Nations specialized agencies and programmes such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), pursuant to the invitation of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to participate in the Eighteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in Kyoto. We encourage inviting experts from these United Nations agencies and programmes to all future meetings. In this regard, we are pleased to note that the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties have agreed to invite the Executive Director of UNEP to attend future meetings of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties in order to assist in the substantive work.

Bearing in mind that this item will be considered by the First Committee at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, we wish to request the Executive Director of

UNEP to submit her report on the results of UNEP's participation to that session.

The Malaysian delegation has already welcomed the positive step taken by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties in the signing in Madrid in October 1991 of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, although it has some shortcomings. We recognize that the Protocol is a measure to protect the environment of Antarctica against the destructive consequences of human activities in that fragile continent. There is a general interest in seeking the Protocol's speedy entry into force. However, to date only a few countries have ratified the Protocol. A few other Governments have stated their intention to ratify it but at the current rate it may be many years before the Protocol is legally binding. Thus, there is little assurance at the juncture that the Madrid Protocol's provisions will be implemented and thereby effectively protect the environment in Antarctica.

It should be every country's desire to see that the Protocol seriously meets its objectives for the protection of the environment in Antarctica. This would be an important effort towards ensuring the permanent protection of Antarctica. It is our earnest hope that the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties can work towards swift ratification and full implementation of the positive measures contained in the Protocol. We also urge the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to continue their efforts by strengthening the provisions of the Protocol, developing new annexes as warranted, negotiating a liability regime and, most important, agreeing to a permanent ban on all commercial-mining resource activities in Antarctica. At the same time, we call on the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to involve the United Nations in the process of strengthening the Madrid Protocol.

Malaysia is encouraged by the increasing international cooperation on environment and scientific research in Antarctica. We are confident that, with the gradual involvement of the United Nations, international cooperation on Antarctica will grow from strength to strength.

In conclusion, as the representative of Malaysia, a country which has traditionally initiated this debate, it is necessary for me to acknowledge with deep appreciation all those who have historically and consistently supported the draft resolutions on Antarctica, even when they were put to the vote. We are grateful for their support for the present draft resolution as well, and look forward to their continued support in 1996. I wish to welcome the positive spirit of the States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, including the Coordinator for this year, Japan. I also wish to convey our appreciation to the delegation of New Zealand for its extremely useful inputs and also to thank the British delegation. Among the non-governmental organizations, I must cite the valuable information and contribution from Greenpeace, without which informed debate on this issue would have been circumscribed. Greenpeace deserves a special expression of appreciation, as of course do all delegations, members of the Secretariat and others whom I have not mentioned by name who have made the consensus possible.

Mr. Owada (Japan): I am speaking today on this item in order to make a statement on behalf of all the States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty.

The Question of Antarctica was placed for the first time on the agenda of the General Assembly during its thirty-eighth session, in 1983. In those days, we adopted consensus resolutions on this issue. However, since 1985 it has become impossible to achieve a consensus in the General Assembly on this issue, because proposed resolutions have come to question the important and effective Treaty system to which many United Nations Members are party. Against this background, as members of the Committee are well aware, the States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty have since then been refraining from participating in the voting on draft resolutions on this item.

Today, however, I am happy to state that this year, for the first time since 1985, a draft resolution has been worked out which, hopefully, can command the consensus of the whole Committee.

This year's draft resolution properly reflects the positive benefits which the Antarctic Treaty provides for the maintenance of international peace and security and promotion of international cooperation. The States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty have always believed that cooperation between nations is the key to the future of Antarctica. The States Parties to the Treaty are pleased that the spirit of cooperation has come to prevail this year, so that a true consensus resolution on this issue has become possible.

I should like to pay high tribute to Malaysia and the States Parties to the Treaty for their tireless and constructive efforts which have resulted in this landmark achievement.

For more than 30 years the Antarctic Treaty has functioned efficiently in coordinating the activities of countries having an interest in the peaceful use of Antarctica. States Parties to the Treaty have reported important progress in the scientific research they have conducted both individually and cooperatively.

The Antarctic Treaty was adopted in 1959 by 12 States; it now has 42 States Parties. Here I wish to underline that the Antarctic Treaty remains open to accession by any United Nations Member State.

The Treaty, which entered into force on 23 June 1961, ensures that in the interest of all mankind Antarctica will forever continue to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and will not become either the scene or the object of international discord.

The Treaty contains far-sighted provisions to achieve its objectives. These include measures to prohibit military activities, nuclear explosions and the disposal of radioactive waste. The Treaty guarantees freedom of scientific research and promotes international scientific co-operation. It also provides for the exchange of detailed information about activities in Antarctica and allows observers free access to all areas of Antarctica to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Treaty. Thanks to these safeguards, the Treaty has been most successful in achieving its objectives.

Pursuant to the relevant articles of the Treaty, representatives of the Parties meet regularly to exchange information, to consult on matters of common interest and to formulate and recommend to their Governments measures intended to further the objective of the Treaty.

The value of Antarctica as an area for scientific research, particularly research essential for understanding the global environment, was recognized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. In acceding to the Treaty, States have committed themselves to the protection of the environment of Antarctica, the largest unspoiled land mass on earth.

As a matter of fact, the most important issues that concern Antarctica today are those that have to do with the environment. The States parties to the Treaty have been aware of these issues since the early 1960s. Thus, in 1964 the parties adopted Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Flora and Fauna. As a follow-up to this, two Conventions entered into force — namely, the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals, and the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. In addition, the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty was adopted in 1991 in Madrid. This Protocol, which forms an integral part of the Antarctic Treaty, establishes a comprehensive, legally binding regime for environmental protection. The Protocol includes provisions for the prohibition of activity relating to the exploration of mineral resources for purposes other than scientific research and requires that human activities in Antarctica be subject to environmental assessment procedures. It ensures that activities undertaken by States Parties in Antarctica are consistent with the goal of protecting the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems. Among the States Parties to the Treaty which have signed the Protocol a number have already completed the ratification procedures while others have indicated that the legislative procedures in their countries are well advanced, giving us reason to hope that ratification by those countries might be expected in 1994 or 1995.

This year, the Eighteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting was held in Kyoto from 11 to 22 April. The Kyoto meeting proved to be fruitful and contributed to furthering the efforts to address a number of issues in a comprehensive manner. Thus it was decided to establish the Transitional Environmental Working Group to prepare for the entry into force of the Protocol.

Among other issues dealt with at the Kyoto meeting were the issues of environmental monitoring and tourism.

First, on environmental monitoring, significant efforts are being made by the States Parties to the Treaty, both individually and collectively, to monitor key environmental parameters in Antarctica which are vital to the understanding of wider global processes. Major research programmes have been established for monitoring, *inter alia*, atmospheric pollution, ozone depletion, and the integrity of the Antarctic ice-sheet and its effects on the rise of the sea level.

To meet the requirements of the Protocol in terms of monitoring the predicted impact of activities in Antarctica, a number of States Parties to the Treaty have undertaken monitoring studies. To meet the request of the Treaty Parties, in addition the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research and the Council of Managers of National Antarctic programmes have agreed to convene a workshop on monitoring. This will provide a framework for a coordinated, continent-wide monitoring programme which

will be specifically designed to meet the requirements of the Protocol.

Secondly, with regard to the issue of tourism in Antarctica, it should be recalled that the provisions of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty apply to both governmental and non-governmental activities in Antarctica, including tourism. As a result, the obligations under both article 8 and annex I of the Protocol will have as great a bearing on tourism as on any other activities carried out in Antarctica. The Treaty Parties are confident that tourist operations in Antarctica can be regulated effectively through the implementation of the Protocol, particularly its environmental impact assessment requirements. In fact, commercial tour operators active in Antarctica have already, ahead of the Protocol's entry into force, published and submitted environmental impact assessments of their operations. This is a trend to be welcomed.

To all the Members of the United Nations interested in the future of Antarctica or in developing scientific activities there, we renew our invitation to accede to the Antarctic Treaty and to take advantage of the existing institutions and experiences of the States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty.

I should like to conclude my statement by expressing my full confidence in the draft resolution and the earnest hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Hurst (Antigua and Barbuda): This year, 1994, marks the twelfth year of our debate on the question of Antarctica. It may be recalled that in 1982 the debate commenced amidst widespread scepticism; there was little hard scientific data about the substantial role which Antarctica plays in the global environmental system. By 1994, our knowledge of Earth's last and only wilderness continent has increased exponentially. Moreover, increased knowledge of the part played by the Antarctic environment has heightened our countries' commitment to the preservation of its unique and life-sustaining ecosystem.

The Antarctic ice mass is invaluable to science. Its layers tell the story of Earth's several climatic changes and it has captured and retained historic and current levels of pollution. Antarctica has a controlling influence on ocean circulation patterns, global weather patterns and, as a consequence, even food production. The continent itself lies at the hub of our planetary weather system. No other continental ecosystem plays such a critical role. The atmosphere, the ice, the seas and the biota of Antarctica interact in a manner which affects our entire global climate through what scientists call bio-geochemical cycles, deep ocean circulation, atmospheric transport of energy and pollutants, and changes in ice-mass balances.

The seas surrounding Antarctica are rich in planktonic species. The Antarctic convergence zone, as the meeting place of the seas is called, is an admixture of cold and warm waters; it is ideal for creating an abundance of marine life. It produces critical nutrients which in turn are carried for thousands of miles to the oceans as food for fish; the food-chain in the oceans begins in Antarctica. Sully Antarctica's waters and it is possible to bring about a global catastrophe.

There is some evidence suggesting that human activity thousands of miles from Antarctica is impacting on planktonic survival; ozone depletion over Antarctica appears to cause deadly ultraviolet radiation to seep into the seas to the detriment of planktonic life. The burning of fossil fuels in abundance since the start of the industrial revolution 100 years ago has resulted in global warming; increased ocean temperatures may also impact on planktonic production. Global warming may also cause the ice of Antarctica to melt; a global rise in sea level would result. The impact on plankton is not yet known; however, we do know that harmful consequences would result for entire regions, such as my Caribbean, far removed from Antarctica. This fact alone compels our inclusion in the debate.

Learning more about Antarctica is crucial if we are to understand such phenomena as global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer. The Secretary-General, in his report, correctly characterized these phenomena as the unexpected and far-reaching consequences of industrial pollution. It may be recalled that in 1992 an area of severe ozone depletion over Antarctica extended more than 9.4 million square miles, and that remains a cause for considerable concern. But this concern is not limited to Antarctica's atmosphere; our concern is also for the fragility of the Antarctic environment and the ability of that environment to recover from other man-induced changes. Changes in the Antarctic environment are likely to trigger alterations in the climate and the environment in other parts of the world. No country will escape the harmful consequences of these changes.

For 12 years my delegation has repeated variations of these warnings. But since 1982 there has been an increase in human activity on Antarctica. Hunting of penguins, the spread of debris from cruise ships and the daily operations

of scientific research facilities continue to pollute Antarctica. Waste disposal by scientific stations and vessels, pollution from the burning of fossil fuels, spills from vessels and storage tanks, and the burning of combustible wastes in open pits: these are among the main sources of pollution and environmental degradation in Antarctica. The problems associated with pollution from fossil fuels is of particular concern: oil-oxidizing bacteria will not proliferate at temperatures below freezing point; hence, little biodegradation or decomposition can take place in Antarctica, because it is always so very cold.

The 1989 diesel-oil spill from the *Bahia Paraiso* at Palmer Station illustrates the potential for high population mortality among marine life forms, especially when accidents of this magnitude occur at the peak of the hatching season. The more recent report of a fuel leak of some 20,000 gallons of gas-oil could pose a danger to Antarctica's animal life and to the food chain if the oil slick from that leak drains into the sea when the meltdown of ice-mass occurs in the warmer months.

It is against this backdrop that we recall the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The world's nations pledged to reduce environmental degradation collectively, while promoting economic development globally. There is a need to address the consequences of the adverse impact of human activities on Antarctica. My delegation echoes the concern contained in the Secretary-General's report in the form of a question. The question is whether the value of the activities undertaken outweighs the inevitable environmental effects and whether it is possible to minimize these effects without undermining the value of the activities.

The attempt to make Antarctica a base for scientific programmes and for peaceful cooperation between nations is commendable. However, we regret that there does not now exist a comprehensive regime for the protection of the Antarctic environment which would serve the interests of all mankind. The 1991 Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection and its annexes, which are an integral part of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, may yet provide some long-term answers for the future of Antarctica and its surrounding areas, provided of course that a number of its provisions are strengthened. We are concerned that the Protocol does not yet have an annex on liability; the Protocol should impose on States a legal obligation to mitigate the effects of an accident. The Madrid Protocol does not provide a functioning mechanism which imposes sanctions on those who may cause harm to Antarctica's fragile terrestrial, glacial and marine environment. We are pleased that, despite its weaknesses, the Madrid Protocol has been adopted by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, and we call for its rapid ratification in order to ensure its early entry into force.

We note with satisfaction that a number of the specialized agencies of the United Nations were invited by the States Parties to the Eighteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in Japan in April. We also welcome the decision of the States Parties to submit to the Secretary-General the final report of that meeting. My delegation is pleased to note that the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme will now be invited to the meetings of States Parties. She has at her disposal a team of experts in the relevant disciplines required for meaningful input during the annual meetings.

Given its immense scientific importance as a treasure trove of data, Antarctica demands a strong United Nations presence. While the Treaty appears to be open to all Member States, in practical terms it is not. Each Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party is required to establish a presence on Antarctica. Forty-two national research stations now burden the hospitable coastline. Try to imagine what the effect of 184 such stations would be. United Nations supervision of the present scientific programmes and projects under way in Antarctica would end the unnecessary duplication, arrest the generation of waste and focus the resources which are now available. Joint research, undertaken following international dialogue and negotiations, would help to minimize the adverse impact of scientific activities on the continent, while spreading knowledge among States Members of the United Nations.

Small island developing States like mine have often indicated our concern with adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change. The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in April of this year, was our foremost statement. An improved understanding of the undeniable link between, on the one hand, the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems and, on the other, the global climate will work to the benefit of islands and of all countries. In particular, we note that there is a growing effort to design and implement measures to prevent, or at least mitigate, the adverse environmental effects of global activities.

My delegation concludes with a call for the protection and conservation of the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems; we maintain that the idea of Antarctica as a world park is one whose time has

come. As a world park, Antarctica's fragile environment would be protected; the continent would become an area of peace, free of nuclear and other weapons and of all military activities. Antarctica could be preserved as a symbol of hope, a unique example of humankind's capacity to preserve its past, to safeguard its present and to guarantee a future for generations not yet born.

Mr. Turay (Sierra Leone): Mr. Chairman, allow me to thank you and the Permanent Representative of Malaysia for your constructive opening statements.

My delegation is pleased that the question of Antarctica, which has been debated in this Committee for the past 12 years, continues to be a subject of growing interest in the international community. This is not a surprise to my delegation in view of the world-wide recognition of the need for concerted international action to protect Antarctica's environment, which is one of the objects of the attention of the international community.

My delegation wishes to see this Committee build on this serious concern to bring about the participation of the international community, under the umbrella of the United Nations, in considering and deciding on the future of Antarctica. Antarctica remains the last pristine frontier for mankind in this world. World-wide concerns about the degradation of our planet should not be limited to our backyards alone. Antarctica, given its importance to the well-being of planet Earth, deserves the attention of the United Nations General Assembly.

My delegation welcomes the agreements reached at the Rio Summit, which recognized the value of Antarctica as an area for the conduct of scientific research essential to the understanding of the global environment. We believe that this recognition is important, taking into consideration the fragility of the environment and ecosystems existing in Antarctica, where the scientific research community's activities and their results could produce results of global significance. Vital to any plan for the preservation of the Antarctic environment is the management of solid and hazardous wastes there. Some countries have waste management plans that, if properly implemented, could prevent serious or irreversible environmental damage.

We welcome the Greenpeace 1992/93 Antarctic expedition report, issued in April 1994, which includes an update on the environmental conditions and the continued scientific monitoring of the former World Park Base site. This information is useful for the evaluation and development of future projects that may affect the territorial Antarctic environment.

We also welcome the continued progress in the field of international cooperation towards an improved understanding of the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems. We agree with the Secretary-General's concluding remarks in his report, in which he said:

> "progress continues in the field of international cooperation towards an improved understanding of the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems. In particular, there is increased sensitivity to the environmental consequences of activities in the Antarctic and a growing effort to design and implement measures to prevent, or at least mitigate, the adverse environmental effects of those activities." *(A/49/370, para. 87)*.

My delegation would like to underscore the decision that information from research studies of the Antarctic should be made available. We remain convinced that the United Nations is the best place to provide excellent services for receiving this information and distributing it to Member States and non-governmental research organizations. The international community should build on the positive developments achieved so far to promote the importance of safeguarding the environment on Antarctica and its impact on the global environment.

Sierra Leone regards the Madrid Protocol as a positive first step for increased cooperation between Consultative Party States on environmental matters. It establishes a Committee on Environmental Protection and provides for procedures for the settlement of disputes. Nevertheless, the provision of the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection which enables 19 of the 26 Consultative Party States to overturn the ban after 50 years has caused considerable concern among States that are not Consultative Parties. My delegation reiterates its call on the Consultative Party States to reconsider this provision, as it is not fair that the agreement of only 19 Consultative Party States is required before the ban can be lifted.

Given the critical importance and the unique attributes of Antarctica, we reject the exclusive and perhaps discriminatory arrangement which places the fate of Antarctica and, consequently, that of the rest of the world, in the hands of 19 States. Our objection is based on two factors.

First, the high price of entry into the Antarctic Treaty "club" is beyond the means of most States. Consultative Party "club members" are required to maintain an active scientific station in Antarctica.

Secondly, the exercise not only is expensive, and hence exclusionary, but has also resulted in overcrowded conditions in several of the more accessible ice-free areas on that continent. This crowding has led, in turn, to an increased accumulation of atmospheric pollution from vehicles and the emergence of more solid human settlements and activities. In the view of our delegation, it is reasonable to expect 153 other States to join this Treaty, as Antarctica is part of the common heritage of mankind.

While we welcome the decision of the States that are Antarctica Treaty Consultative Parties to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations the final report of their meetings, we regret their decision to ignore General Assembly resolutions. Antarctica demands a strong United Nations presence. My delegation reiterates its call for the establishment of a United Nations research station there and an end to the proliferation of such stations. My delegation is of the firm view that the United Nations is the most appropriate body for the control of Antarctica. That being the case, we would request that the Secretary-General or his United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) representative play a leading role in decisions affecting Antarctica. I repeat: the UNEP representative should play a leading role in decisions affecting Antarctica.

In this connection, we are convinced that the United Nations and its specialized organs have the expertise and world-wide network to receive, compile and distribute whatever information may be needed by Member States and research organizations. The international community should build on the positive developments of the Rio Summit to promote the importance of safeguarding the environment on Antarctica and its impact on the global environment.

We look forward to the holding of seminars and symposiums on the subject by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party countries pursuant to the agreement concluded at the Rio Summit. United Nations supervision of the scientific programmes that are currently under way in Antarctica would end unnecessary duplication, arrest the waste and focus on resources that are now available. Research undertaken following international dialogue and negotiations would help to minimize the adverse impact of scientific activities on the continent, while spreading knowledge among States Members of the United Nations.

We certainly hope that the Secretariat of the United Nations, including the Department of Public Information, will continue producing information material on Antarctica. This has helped the public at large to gain a better understanding of the issues involved, specifically on Antarctica's influence on the global environment. The results achieved this year in putting forward a consensus draft resolution are encouraging. We sincerely hope that the support of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties will be forthcoming. Sierra Leone is a co-sponsor of the consensus draft resolution on this item, and we underline the need for the Committee to discuss the item at its fifty-first session.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that Sierra Leone is, on the whole, encouraged by the increased international cooperation on the environmental and scientific research in Antarctica, with the gradual involvement of the United Nations. We believe that this will help strengthen the overall climate of peace and cooperation in Antarctica.

Mr. Mongbe (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): Antarctica, a remote, ice-covered continent with an indisputable and definite influence over the world's climate system, over the atmosphere of the planet and over ocean circulation, is the common heritage of mankind, as the General Assembly stated in its 1983 declaration.

The consideration of the question of Antarctica by the First Committee since the General Assembly's thirty-eighth session has made it possible for the community of nations to give scrupulous attention to ensuring that Antarctica will forever be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and will not become the scene or object of international discord. We must not forget that, strategists assure us that this continent could have a decisive effect on a possible battle in the surrounding sea.

The demilitarization and denuclearization of Antarctica became possible, of course, with the signing of the Washington Treaty of 1959, under which Member States of the United Nations — numbering 42 today — simply put on the back burner their age-old conflicts and claims to sovereignty over the continent.

Unfortunately, however, Antarctica remains a bone of contention between Member States of the United Nations and thus a source of potential instability in our world, even as it continues to celebrate the end of the cold war, which was characterized by planetary rivalry and the dangers of global confrontation. Not only has there been discrimination between the States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty and its

Consultative Parties, but most of the members of the international community have been excluded from any involvement with Antarctica, even though this is vital for its survival.

It is unacceptable for the fate of a continent of global importance such as Antarctica to rest solely in the hands of a minority of States. In the interest of international peace and security, it is time that all activities involving Antarctica were conducted under the supreme authority of the United Nations Secretary-General, as he is the representative of the international community and has at his disposal a solid team of experts in various Antarctica-related areas such as hydrography, climatology, seismography and so on.

In his report (A/49/370), the Secretary-General has submitted to us an assessment of international cooperation on Antarctica. The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, which had promised to provide him, on an ongoing basis, with more information and documents relating to all aspects of Antarctica, confined themselves to transmitting to him the final report of their Eighteenth Meeting, held in Kyoto from 11 to 22 April 1994, which indicated cooperation with certain programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations. But, regrettably, the Secretary-General and his Representative are still not involved in the meetings of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties.

Non-military threats are looming today over the state of the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems. The Secretary-General, in his report to which I have already referred, has sounded the alarm. He states:

> "Despite its remoteness, Antarctica is not immune from the atmospheric pollution of industrialization. In addition to this external source, the human presence in Antarctic contributes to the contamination of the air. As is its atmosphere, Antarctica's terrestrial environment is extremely vulnerable to the effects of human activity. Damage is generally slow to correct itself." *(A/49/370, paras. 16 and 23)*

The adoption of the Madrid Protocol in 1991 reflected the Consultative Parties' awareness of the need to protect Antarctica's environment. Under that Protocol, which has no significant verification measures, prospecting for and mining mineral resources in Antarctica and its environs are prohibited for a period of 50 years. Since no human activity conducted in Antarctica can fail to have some deleterious effect on the environment, this prohibition must be made permanent and steps must be taken, through an international convention, to turn Antarctica into a natural preserve or a world park devoted to peace and scientific research, in the interest of all humankind.

Benin would like to remind the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties that, under the terms of their common commitment to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, they must, under chapter 7 of Agenda 21, organize yearly a symposium or international seminar on the environment in Antarctica.

Furthermore, the Secretary-General must continue to receive all the support necessary for the publication by the Department of Information of documentation enabling the public at large to become more aware of the importance of Antarctica to a balanced world ecosystem.

The question of Antarctica is one of the major challenges to be met by our Organization, in the interest of stability and well-being for all. The United Nations is coming to an important turning-point in its history when it must be neither indecisive nor inward-looking. Having assessed the importance of this fact, the delegation of Benin, at the General Assembly's forty-eighth session, called on the States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, as well as on the Consultative Parties, to take a constructive attitude towards Antarctica.

The forty-ninth session will bear the mark of this positive development concerning this matter. The statement made a few moments ago by Ambassador Ismail Razali of Malaysia shows that the States Parties to the Treaty will continue to cooperate with States that have not yet acceded to the Treaty. We found the statement made by Ambassador Hisashi Owada of Japan an eloquent reiteration of what was so well said by the Ambassador of Malaysia. This is a relief to all of us because it is proof of our common desire to see the United Nations turn towards the future by, *inter alia*, reinforced international cooperation.

Benin is very pleased about this and pays tribute to Malaysia and Japan, as well as to all the other States which, by preparing the draft resolution, have helped us to make Antarctica a question of common concern. My delegation pays a special tribute to you, Mr. Chairman, for your efforts to this end. I hope that draft resolution A/C.1/49/L.53 will be recommended by the Committee to the General Assembly without a vote and that the plenary Assembly will act similarly when it comes to the final adoption of this text.

Under the draft resolution, we shall have an opportunity at the fifty-first session of the Assembly to evaluate how much we have achieved together.

I cannot end my statement without applauding the courage and far-sightedness of some non-governmental organizations, such as Greenpeace, which have worked tirelessly to inculcate in all the States Members of the United Nations an understanding of what is at stake in Antarctica.

Mr. Jeelani (Pakistan): If the whole range of complex and interrelated environmental, economic, scientific and security issues pertaining to Antarctica is to be managed successfully, the international community needs to have a common vision of the continent. In our opinion, the only legitimate vision of Antarctica is one that recognizes it as a fragile and critically important ecosystem that needs to be studied and preserved for the benefit of all mankind.

Informed by this vision, Pakistan has consistently taken the position that there should be a permanent ban on prospecting for and on the exploitation of minerals in Antarctica. The signing, in 1991, of the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection, which bans prospecting and mining in and around Antarctica for 50 years, was a positive step. However, we continue to hope that the international community will eventually agree to convert this limited ban into a permanent one.

Besides the prevention of large-scale economic activity that might have disastrous and irreversible effects on Antarctica's environment, there is a need for strict regulation of existing activity that poses a growing threat to the continent's ecosystem. In this regard, urgent measures need to be taken to regulate tourism, protect fisheries and prevent and clear oil spillages. Additional regimes might be elaborated to deal with these issues. In addition, consideration might be given to the question of strengthening the Madrid Protocol by appending clauses relating to liability for damage resulting from activities covered by the Protocol.

While eschewing activities that are directed at the economic exploitation of Antarctica, the international community needs to strengthen and coordinate ongoing programmes aimed at scientific study of the continent. Coordinated scientific research on Antarctica is capable of yielding invaluable data regarding global climate, marine resources and the long-term effects of environmental pollution.

Since 1991 Pakistan has been engaged in a sustained and successful programme of research expeditions to the continent. Our scientists have established the Jinnah Antarctic Research Station, which is being used as a staging-point for a broad range of studies. These pertain primarily to the ecology of the polar seas; ice-sheet dynamics; the monitoring of weather conditions; the detection of trace matter in ice, air and sea and its environmental effects; and the geological and geophysical mapping of the area around the station.

The organization and successful management of this research activity has been a challenging task. We are grateful for the cooperation and assistance given to us by a number of friendly countries that are also members of the Antarctic Treaty System. We look forward to continued cooperation with these States in our further endeavours. At the same time, we should like to assure all States that the results of our research will be freely and openly available to the international community.

This Committee's deliberations on Antarctica are of the utmost importance. The decisions that we take are vital for the successful management of the Antarctic continent but, in addition, if wisely arrived at, they will demonstrate that the international community is capable of addressing complex issues in a peaceful and productive manner. That is why we shall welcome the adoption of a consensus draft resolution on the question of Antarctica.

Mr. Nkurlu (United Republic of Tanzania): The uniqueness of the continent of Antarctica is the cornerstone of the future — albeit uncertain — of this significant region, which has preoccupied the First Committee in its deliberations since the item was first taken up in the General Assembly in 1983.

Antarctica, which constitutes more than one tenth of the land surface of the Earth, is a relatively unspoilt wilderness of immense scope and is essential to the health and functioning of the planet's ecosystem. The basically pristine nature of the region provides unique opportunities for research that is crucial to the study of the phenomenon of global change, including global warming and ozone-layer depletion. It is in this context that uncoordinated impacts on Antarctica could adversely affect the world's atmospheric and oceanic systems and threaten the continent's status as the most sophisticated natural global laboratory.

My delegation's main concern is the fragility of Antarctica, which, of late, has become extremely vulnerable to the impact of human activities. An

uninhabited continent three decades ago, the region has gradually become populated by several hundred people, whose activities have produced unwanted chemicals and gases that pollute the atmosphere and cause irreparable damage. As a result, the territorial fresh water and marine ecosystems are becoming extremely untenable because, in Antarctica's incredibly harsh climate, growth is slow, and recovery from such disturbances can take a long time.

In this vein, the study of Antarctica's ice sheets is of vital importance as they constitute the most striking feature of the region. They are the result of the accumulation of snow over the past 100,000 years. Melting of the ice sheets alone could be devastating, as sea levels would be raised to such an extent that low-lying countries, coastal areas and, indeed, islands throughout the world would be wiped out. This is certainly a serious matter, which deserves our utmost attention.

The uniqueness of Antarctica also stems from what it possesses. It is rich in planktonic species which provide a foundation for the marine ecosystem. The Antarctic convergence zone, where cold waters of the Antarctic sink below the warmer waters of the Pacific, provides the environment for explosions of life and nutrients that are carried thousands of miles to other parts of the world.

Now that I have examined the importance, fragility and vulnerability of the Antarctic, it is only fair and pertinent at this juncture to pay special tribute to the Secretary General for his report contained in document A/49/370 of 13 September 1994, which has shed a lot of light on developments pertaining to Antarctica. As the report aptly points out, there is increased sensitivity to the environmental consequences of activities in Antarctica; hence the urgent need to design and implement measures to prevent, or at least mitigate, the environmental degradation of the ever-increasing human activities in the area.

It is equally encouraging to learn that the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, in conformity with resolution 48/80 of 16 December 1993, released their final report on the Eighteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in Kyoto last April. We take cognizance of this report, which, among other things, acknowledges the impossibility of achieving uniform application of the Madrid Protocol, which calls for the development of a comprehensive regime for the conservation of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems, in the interest of the global community. The report recognizes the need, given the number of different national legislative approaches, to harmonize interpretations of the Protocol's conditions and to clarify the meaning of certain provisions to facilitate that exercise.

It is against this backdrop that over the last decade Tanzania has joined proponents of Antarctica's management as a common heritage of mankind, in view of the critical importance and unique attributes of the region. In this light, we remain convinced that the United Nations, with its specialized organs, is the most competent and viable body to receive, compile and distribute any pertinent information to Member States and research organizations, because of its diversity in terms of its universal membership, worldwide network and expertise.

Tanzania commends the latest turn of events on this burning issue. Differences which have been manifested for so long between advocates of Antarctica as a common heritage of mankind and the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties are being bridged. This year, for the first time in 12 years, we have a consensus draft resolution, and the United Nations will be represented in future sessions of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, thus establishing a link between the United Nations and those Consultative Parties. This is a welcome move for us, since we have always held the view that the Secretary-General, with a backup team of experts in various fields, could contribute immensely in deliberations of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties in a number of ways.

However, parties to the Antarctic Treaty need to go an extra mile and fully endorse the United Nations as the most appropriate body to take control of Antarctica in order to achieve the noble global objective of turning this unique continent into a common heritage of the entire international community.

My delegation fully supports the draft resolution before us and underlines the importance and need of this Committee's remaining seized of this item.

Mr. Jusuf (Indonesia): Ever since the General Assembly became seized of the question of Antarctica 11 years ago, the debates in our Committee have articulated both the contributions made by the Treaty of 1959 and the reservations expressed by a number of States concerning its functioning. Thus, Member States from various regions have readily acknowledged, *inter alia*, its role in demilitarization and denuclearization, and especially in the promotion of scientific research. We have also become more fully aware of the fragility and vulnerability of Antarctica's environment and ecosystem, as well as its

relevance to global change and human activities. The reports submitted by the Secretary-General in the past have rightly focused our attention on some of these aspects and contributed to the furthering of our understanding and knowledge of this continental wilderness.

Hence, it is gratifying to note from the Secretary-General's latest report, contained in document A/49/370, that Antarctica continues to play a critical role as a centre for scientific programmes and peaceful cooperation between nations and for an improved understanding of its own environment and dependent and associated ecosystems. In this context, we hope that the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection will soon be ratified so that its provisions can be enforced throughout the Antarctic area. This will benefit not only the Antarctic environment but also the whole system.

Concurrently, we should also build on the positive developments of the 1992 Rio Conference in promoting the importance of safeguarding the Antarctic environment. The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties' report on the meeting held in Kyoto last April has provided some pertinent information. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions made by a number of interested organizations, which have enhanced our knowledge of the Antarctic region.

As all activities in Antarctica impinge upon the vital interests of all nations, international cooperation has become imperative. We are concerned that without a broadened institutional framework to coordinate the various activities in Antarctica the Treaty will inevitably show signs of stress.

Yet the hopes aroused among Member States that the Consultative Parties will address the inherent flaws and weaknesses of the Antarctic Treaty have been dashed. Thus, efforts for a broad-based framework to deal with the various aspects of Antarctica have been rebuffed. In effect, a minority of States endowed with technological capabilities continue to exclude the vast majority from decision-making processes, although activities in Antarctica will have a world-wide impact. Participation in meetings is, for the most part, restricted, while vital information continues to be meagre. Hence, accountability is lacking. The obligation to conduct scientific experiments and programmes militates against the technologically underprivileged countries. Consequently, we have seen the unacceptable perpetuation of the status quo through the maintenance of a restrictive, unequal and discriminatory regime.

Furthermore, many developing nations remain disappointed at the virtual stalemate in bringing scientific and environmental activities under the multilateral auspices of our Organization. We are oblivious neither of the establishment of an increasing number of scientific research stations, with their potentially disastrous environmental consequences, nor of the growing number of tourists, which presents new threats to Antarctica's pristine environment.

The ecosystem of the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean island nations like Indonesia is inseparable and closely linked to that of Antarctica and would be profoundly affected by unpredictable changes in its environment. It is therefore untenable to assert that the management of Antarctica should remain the sole jurisdiction of a limited number of States.

It bears reiteration that the protection and preservation of Antarctica has become a common and universal concern and can no longer remain the exclusive prerogative of a select group of nations. To Indonesia — and, indeed, to a vast majority of Member States — the principle of universality should be deemed pertinent and relevant in the context of Antarctica. Since our understanding of global changes depends upon a coherent programme in the region on a long-term basis, collaboration among the Member States on issues concerning Antarctica has much to commend it. We therefore agree with the widely expressed view that national scientific expeditions should be replaced by internationally coordinated programmes under the auspices of the United Nations.

What is needed is an open, equitable and accountable framework in which to provide greater access to and wider dissemination of information, increased cooperation between scientists from interested countries and the establishment of an organic link between the Antarctic Treaty system and the United Nations system. Such an approach would ensure coordinated scientific research, environmental protection, respect for wilderness values and the maintenance of Antarctica as an area of peace and cooperation for posterity.

In short, the management of Antarctica should necessarily be viewed in the wider global context of the collective responsibility of all nations. The sustained interest in the concept of Antarctica as a natural reserve or world park has heightened our hopes for the future of that continent. The global community has a solemn obligation to ensure that the last great frontier on Earth be managed on the basis of international cooperation and in the interest

of all mankind. By recognizing the legitimacy of the concerns of all nations and harmonizing our actions, we can further advance the common objectives of the Treaty. Ultimately, our aim is to ensure that Antarctica will forever remain a conduit for cooperation between nations in this interdependent world.

Before concluding, I should like to say that we welcome the efforts made by the delegations of Malaysia and Japan, as well as by you, Mr. Chairman, which will once again lead to the adoption of a draft resolution (A/C.1/49/L.53) by consensus. My delegation regards this development as a positive sign and one that augurs well for our continuing endeavours to seek even larger areas of agreement in the future pertaining to the question of Antarctica.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I am pleased to report that the intensive consultations held over the past few days among the delegations most directly concerned with the question of Antarctica, have concluded successfully and that I am now able to submit to the First Committee for its consideration draft resolution A/C.1/49/L.53.

I should point out the following:

The preamble to the draft resolution reaffirms that the management and use of the continent should be conducted in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and of promoting international cooperation for the benefit of mankind as a whole. It further recognizes that the Antarctic Treaty provides for the demilitarization of the continent, the prohibition of nuclear explosions and the disposal of nuclear wastes, the freedom of scientific research and the free exchange of scientific information.

The preamble also takes into account the importance of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, which states that the development of a global system for the protection of the Antarctic environment is in the interest of mankind as a whole, since, given its influence on atmospheric and ocean currents as well as on climatic conditions, that continent plays a critical role in the world environmental system.

The preamble to the draft resolution also notes that the Madrid Protocol lays down fundamental principles for the protection of the Antarctic environment in the promotion of peace and scientific research. The preamble therefore affirms the conviction that, in the interest of all mankind, Antarctica should continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and that it should not become the scene or object of international discord.

One of the key aspects under constant consideration has been the need to provide the Secretary-General with information on meetings of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties and on their activities, in addition to the information which they must provide on developments in relation to Antarctica. This is reflected in operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution.

Operative paragraph 4 is of particular importance, in that it urges the Antarctic Treaty Parties to extend invitations to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to attend future consultative meetings. There is no doubt that the participation of that senior official will be very valuable in the substantive work of those meetings.

Operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution reiterates ideas expressed in paragraph 5 of resolution 48/80. It was considered indispensable to reiterate the particular importance of chapter 17 of Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In addition, paragraph 6 urges the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to take into account the outcomes of the Rio Conference.

The draft resolution basically draws upon the principle of international cooperation. It bears in mind that the Antarctic Treaty system is unique in promoting and regulating scientific cooperation, resource conservation and environmental protection. Antarctica should continue to be a centre for scientific programmes and for cooperation for peaceful purposes among nations.

As the Secretary-General has stated in his report:

> "there is increased sensitivity to the environmental consequences of activities in the Antarctic and a growing effort to design and implement measures to prevent, or at least mitigate, the adverse environmental effect of those activities" *(A/49/370, para. 87)*.

This draft resolution reflects the increased efforts of the First Committee following 11 years of consideration of this topic. That is why the delegations concerned hope that

it will be adopted by the Committee without a vote, and I join in that hope.

(Spoke in English)

The Committee will now take a decision on draft resolution A/C.1/49/L.53, which I have just introduced. I propose that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote.

May I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt this draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/C.1/49/L.53 was adopted.

The Chairman: The Committee has thus concluded its work on agenda item 67, entitled "Question of Antarctica", and its consideration of all the agenda items allocated to it by the General Assembly.

Concluding statement by the Chairman

The Chairman *(interpretation from Spanish):* The General Assembly has stipulated that the forty-ninth session should suspend on 20 December 1994 at the latest and end on Monday, 18 September 1995. It has recommended that the Main Committees complete their work before 2 December 1994. Now that we have concluded the consideration of our programme of work before the date recommended by the General Assembly, I wish to reiterate what I said in my statement on Friday 17 December — that the results achieved to date are due basically to the spirit of cooperation and friendly and sincere understanding that has guided all delegations in presenting their positions and defending their interests.

I also wish to highlight the important work done by the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur of the Committee — Mr. Yoshitomo Tanaka of Japan and Mr. Thomas Stelzer of Austria and Mr. Peter Goosen of South Africa, respectively. They have made possible important achievements through their initiatives and efforts to ensure coordination. I wish in particular to express the Committee's and my own gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and the Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Prvoslav Davinic, who have always given decisive assistance to us in our work.

Our work has benefited also from the invaluable cooperation of Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, the Secretary of the Committee, who has always made available to us his invaluable wide experience. I also wish to express the Committee's and my own gratitude to the entire dynamic Secretariat team, which has been consistently attentive and solicitous in fulfilling our requirements. We also thank the interpreters, who have always demonstrated understanding and good will in assisting us in our work, as well as all the staff members involved in the preparation of records and press releases and in the distribution of documents. I thank them all for their untiring efforts.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.